ABSTRACT

A network e-commerce mall is provided that allows secure access by a user to a merchant for a transaction through a gateway established by a user account custodian. A switch associates user indicia with account custodians; associates merchants with their account custodians; and transmits a record of transaction value and, respectively, user indicia and merchant identity, to the user account custodian and to the merchant account custodian such that a transaction is effected with guaranteed funds in real time. The switch initiates and effects net settlement of transaction values between and among user account custodians and merchant account custodians.